

Mark Edmondson

PARTNERING UP



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About the Author

Partnering Up is Mark's second book, following on from the success of "A Better Axe" – a tale of innovation and change.

Mark's enthusiasm for technology was sparked at an early age when he created a database management solution to help his father and other farmers manage onerous livestock administration.

Later he started his career in professional services, working for a small local accounting firm before joining Big 4 firm, PwC. During his time at PwC, Mark played a key role leading several global innovation projects. These projects transformed the technology and process used by PwC auditors around the world.

In 2016 Mark founded Inflo, with a mission to make auditing more attractive for the accountants of today, and the future. Inflo offers accounting firms leading technology combined with passionate subject matter experts who partner with firms to advance their business into the digital era.

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To learn more about Inflo, use the QR code or visit
www.inflosoftware.com



Once upon a time, in the chaotic world of Sums CPAs, Jane found herself drowning in paperwork and desperately in need of a partner.

She dialed up Lola Jobs, the local recruiter, hoping for a savior to rescue her from the vortex of documents.



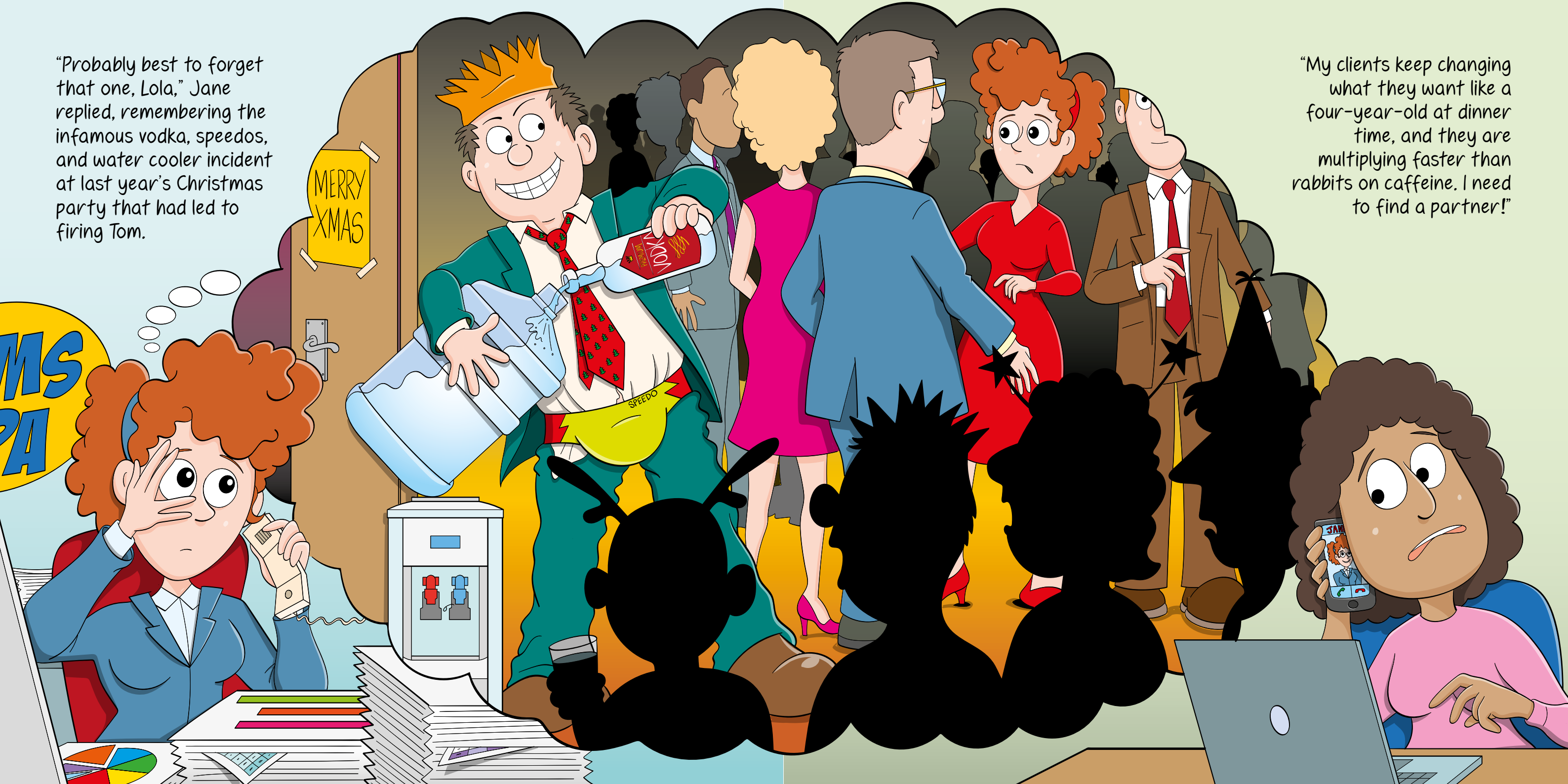
"Hi Lola, it's Jane Sums here. Do you have a moment?" Jane opened.

"Great to hear from you Jane! It has been a few years since we hired Tom for you," Lola reminisced.



"Probably best to forget that one, Lola," Jane replied, remembering the infamous vodka, speedos, and water cooler incident at last year's Christmas party that had led to firing Tom.

"My clients keep changing what they want like a four-year-old at dinner time, and they are multiplying faster than rabbits on caffeine. I need to find a partner!"

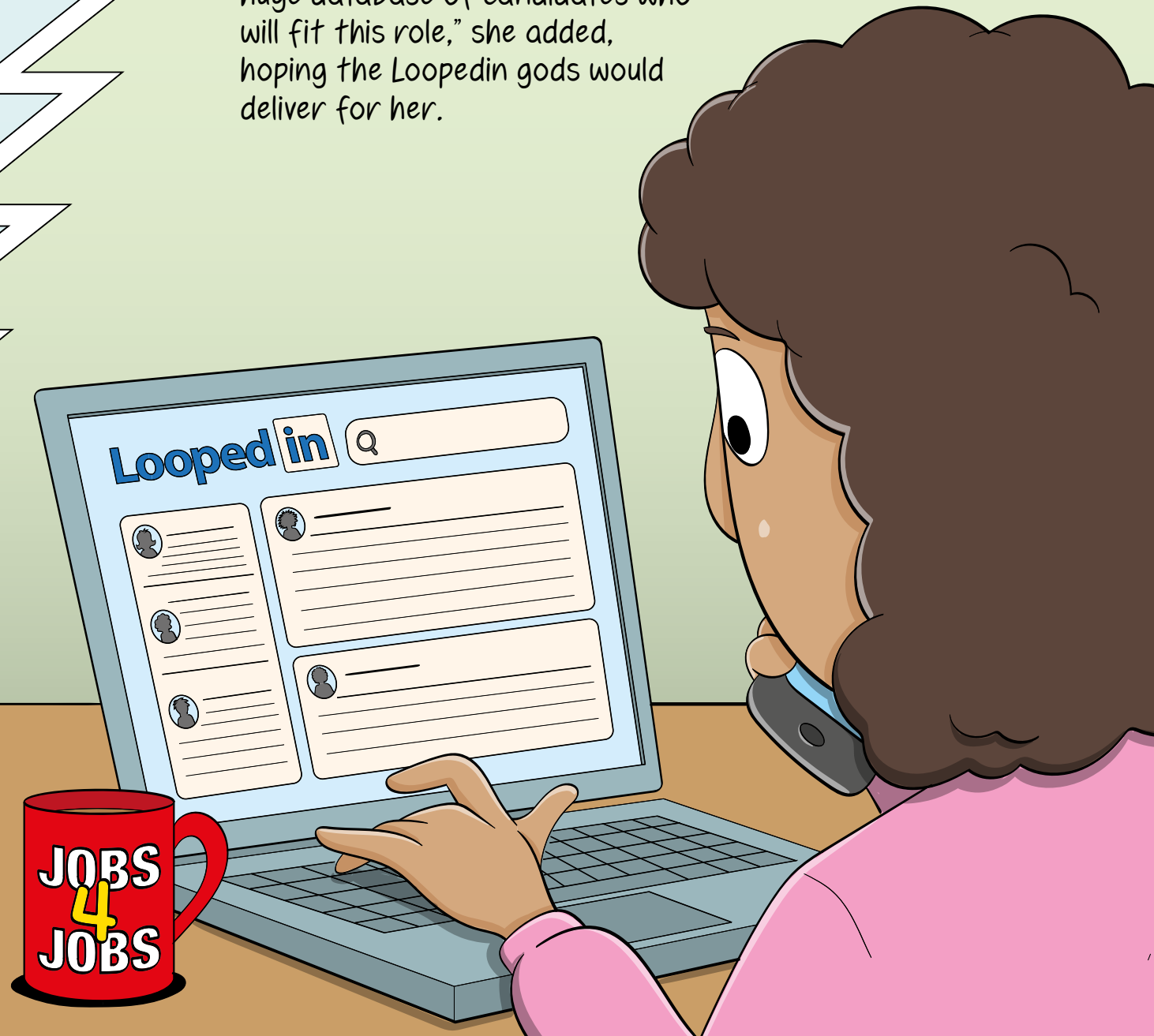
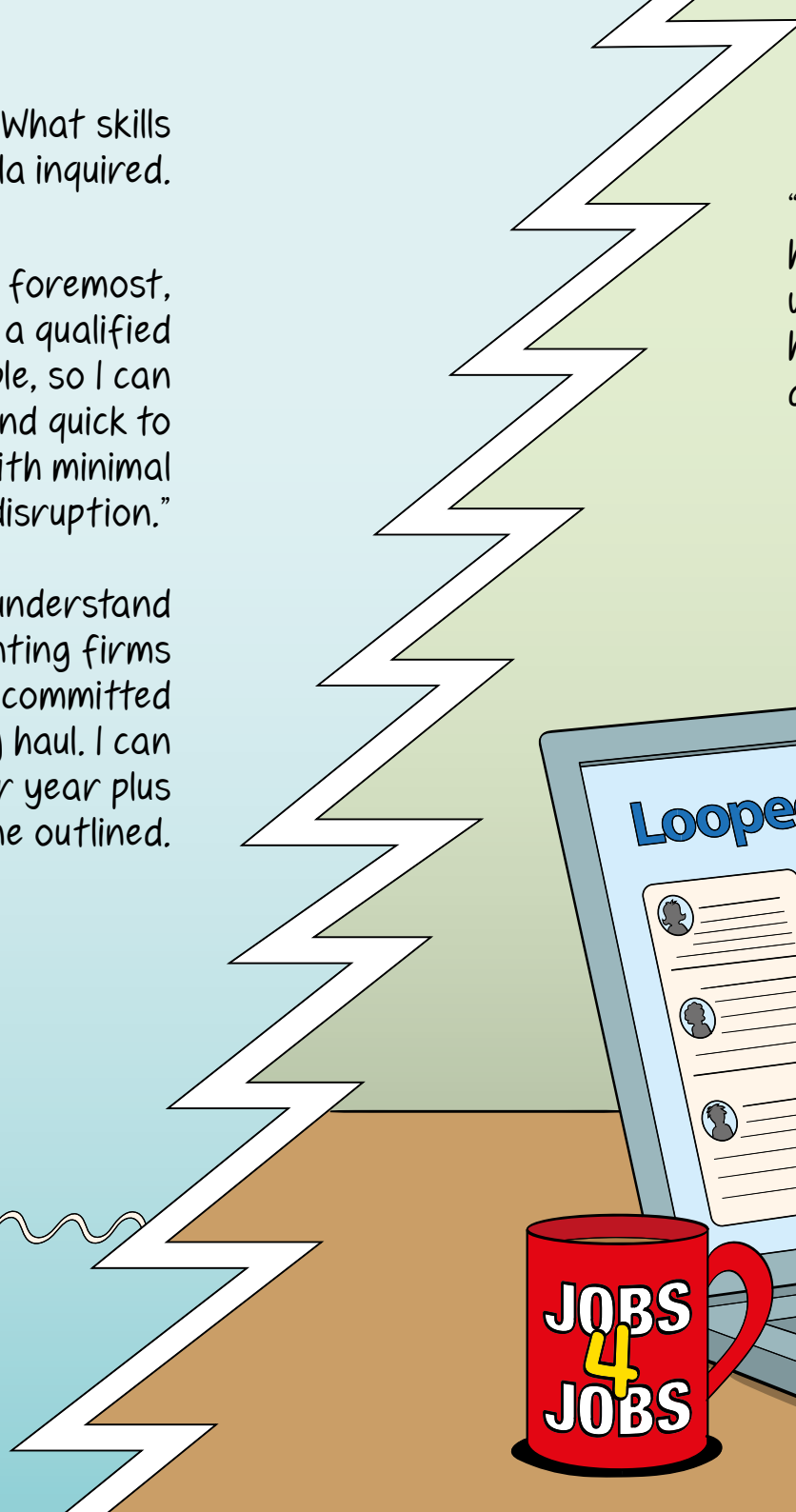


"We can certainly help with that, Jane. What skills and experience are you looking for?" Lola inquired.

"Well, first and foremost, they must be a qualified CPA. Dependable, so I can rely on them, and quick to integrate with minimal disruption."

"They need to understand how accounting firms work and be committed for the long haul. I can pay \$90,000 per year plus benefits," Jane outlined.

"Got it," Lola responded. "I have a huge database of candidates who will fit this role," she added, hoping the Loopedin gods would deliver for her.

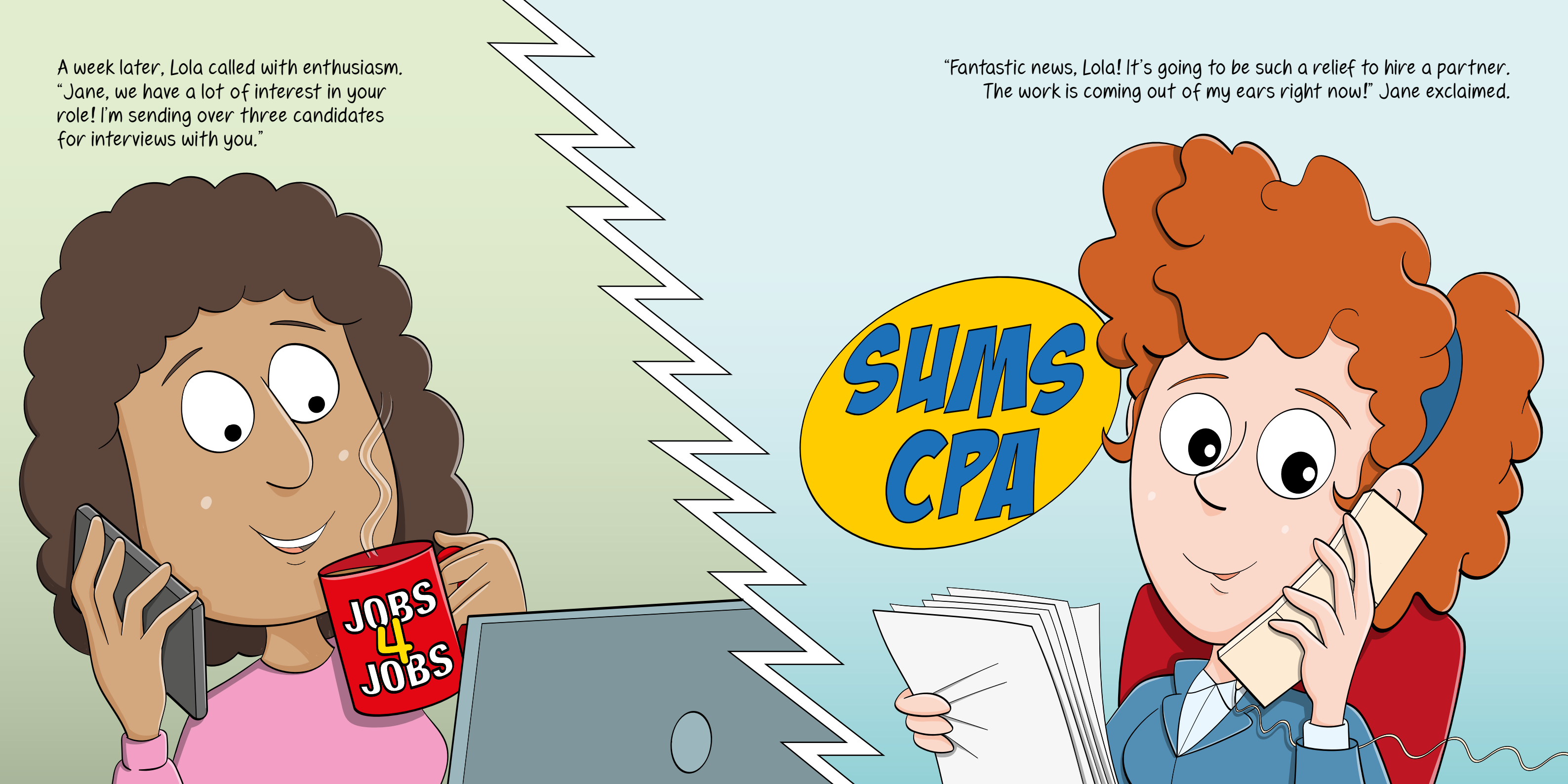


Jane wasn't as optimistic. Her prior attempts to recruit a partner had felt like trying to find someone capable of tackling Lamar Jackson among a group of 7-year-olds.



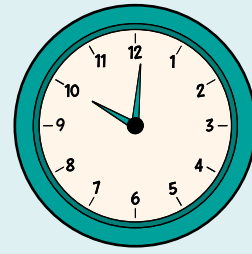
A week later, Lola called with enthusiasm.
“Jane, we have a lot of interest in your
role! I’m sending over three candidates
for interviews with you.”

“Fantastic news, Lola! It’s going to be such a relief to hire a partner.
The work is coming out of my ears right now!” Jane exclaimed.



The next day Chuck, Jane's long-time associate at the firm, walked into her office bearing the cookie jar.

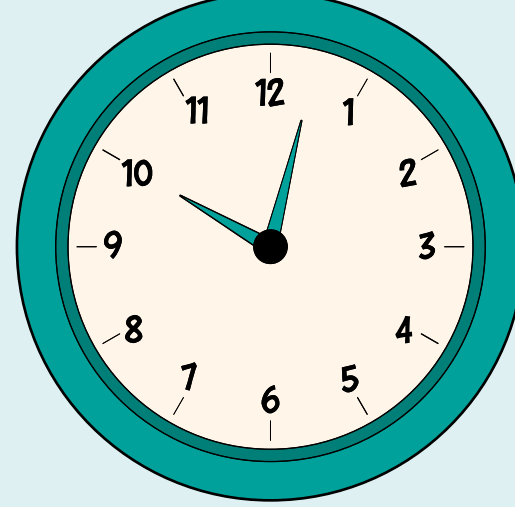
"Cookies, great idea!" said Jane as she rushed to tidy the stacks of paper on her desks. "What can I help you with before my first candidate arrives?"



"I'm here to help you, dear!" Chuck declared between cookie bites. "I'm going to be your new partner."



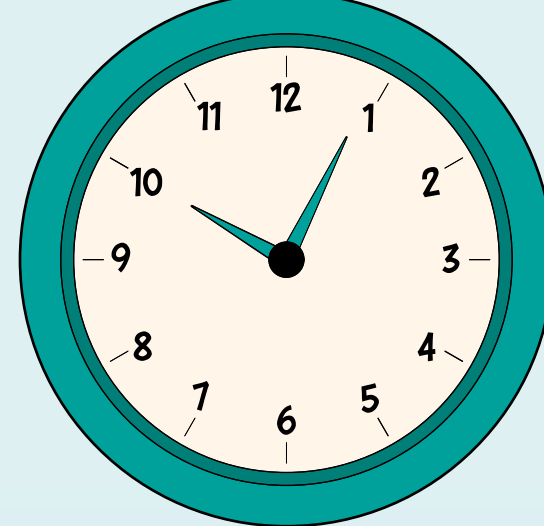
"Oh," Jane gasped. "So, you're Charles Hall, my 10 am?"



"Yes. I just have a few questions. Do I get a special parking space, preferably next to yours?"
Chuck asked, crumbs falling like confetti.



Jane, caught off guard, stammered. "There are no parking preferences. Wait, you want to apply for the partner role? I thought you were retiring. Actually, I thought you said you were retiring five years ago?"



"I'm only 75 years young! Still some life in me yet! I have been working for you for 20 years, so who better to be your partner?" said Chuck.



It was true, Chuck had been at the firm 20 years ago when Jane had taken over. At the time, Chuck was the best in his field. But, he hadn't kept up with the times and his refusal to graduate from paper and pencil was infuriating.

Most days now, Chuck dozes off at his desk, just when there is an important deadline to hit.





"I need someone with strong IT skills, Chuck," Jane sighed.

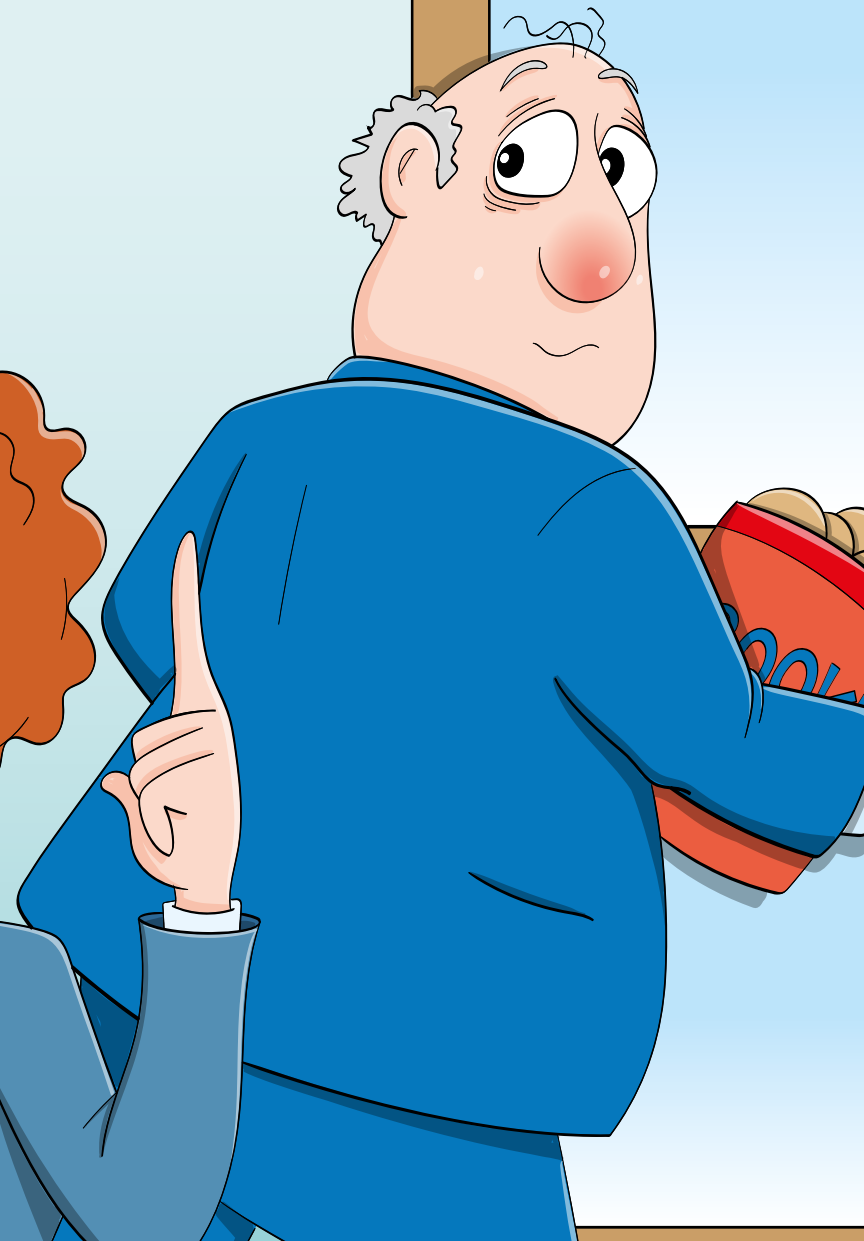


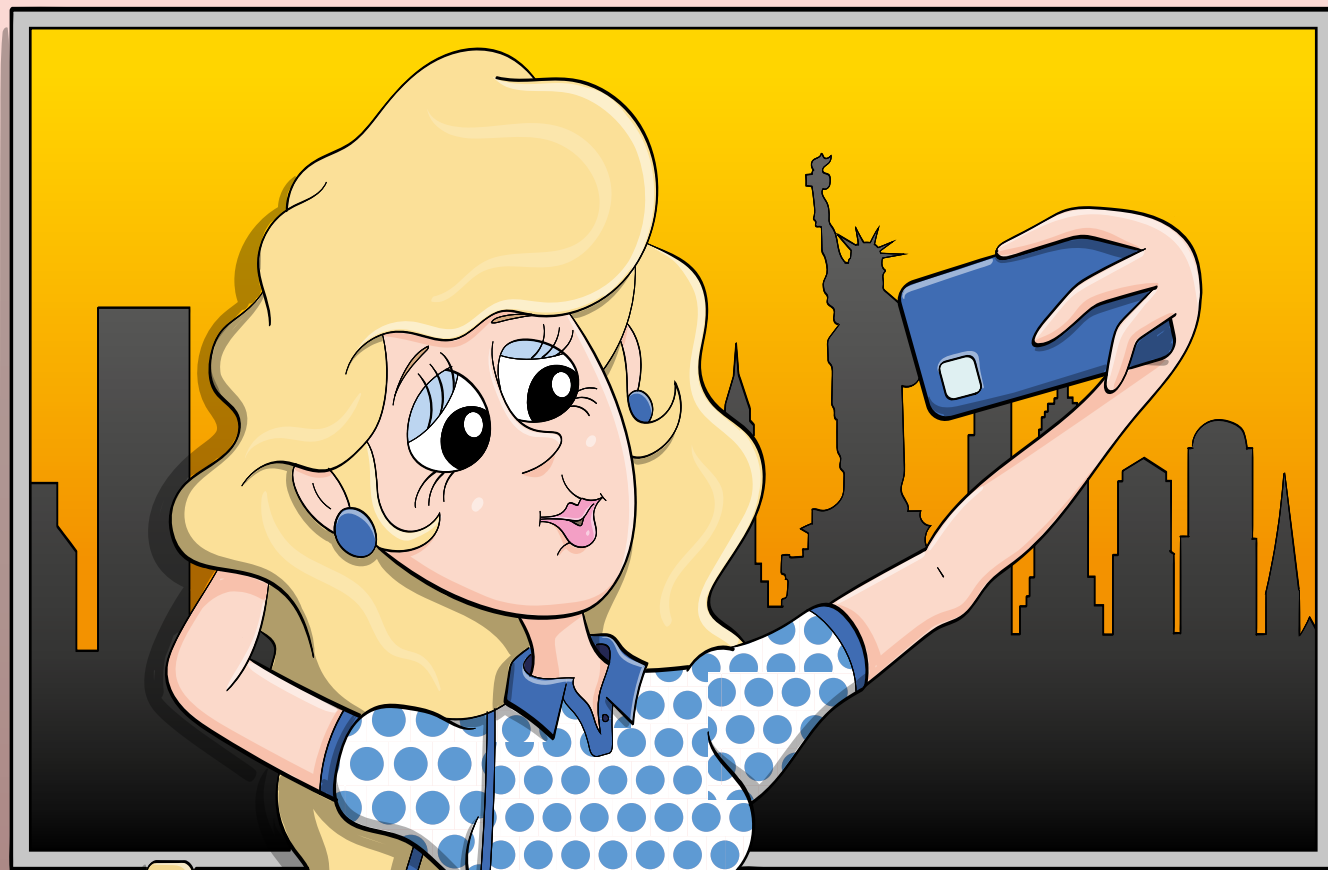
"I sent my first email last week, and I'm getting Tick Tocked next! Give me 12 months and I'll be better than all those young 'uns on my Personal Computer," Chuck assured.

"You have promised to start using a computer for at least the last 5 years, Chuck," said Jane.

"Sending one email feels like too little too late..." she added under her breath to avoid Chuck's hearing range. Jane felt like Chuck would probably buy her a group hot air balloon ride if she asked him to move her business to the cloud.

"Thank you for your interest and commitments to modernize, Chuck. I'll let you know," Jane stated, wondering if retiring herself was a better option than promoting Chuck.





Next day Jane found Amelia Bridges in reception, taking selfies in front of her large canvas painting of the New York skyline.

"I got you some champagne from my trip to the south of France this weekend. I thought of you when I saw it!" Amelia beamed as she walked into the office.

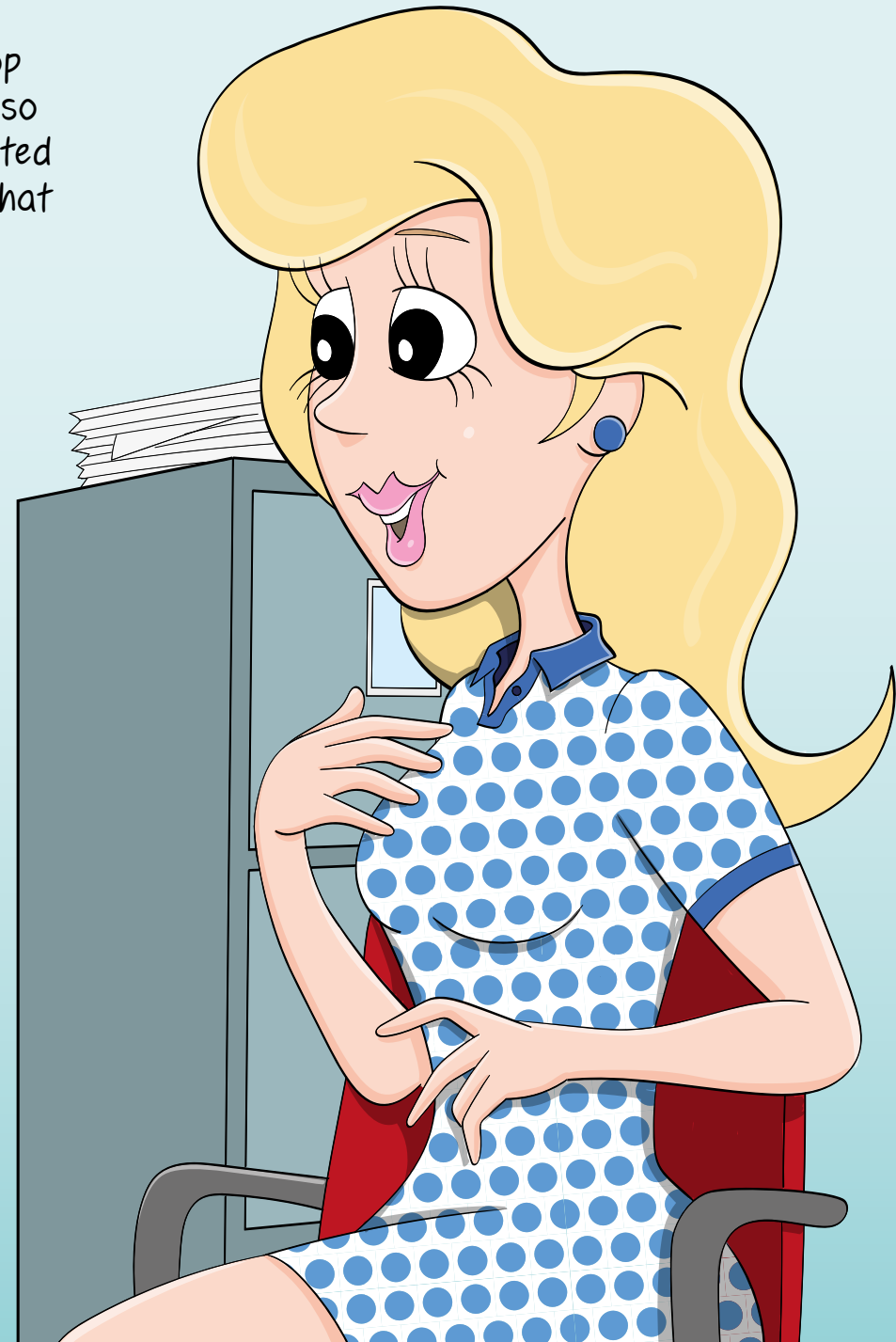


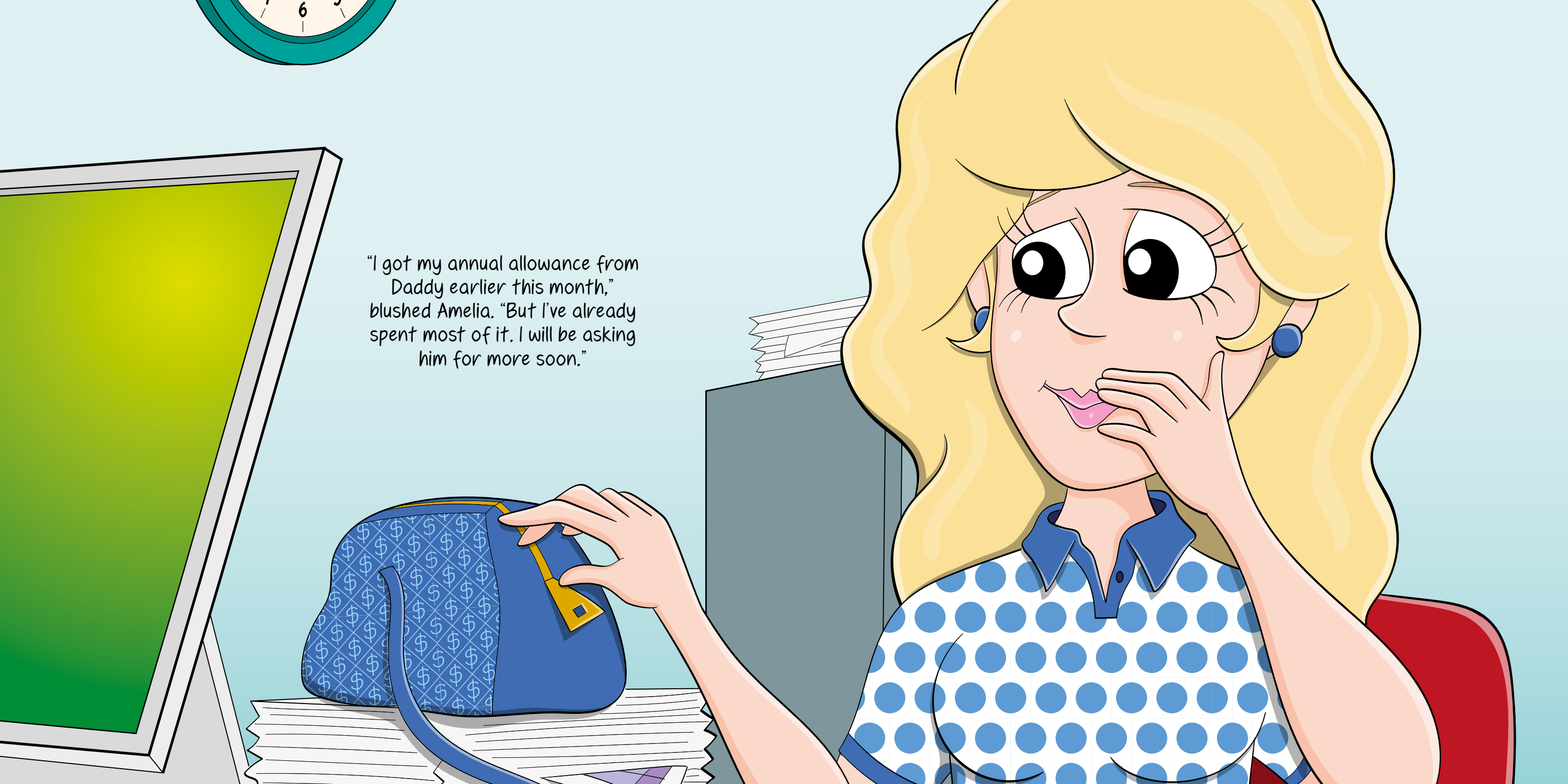
"Wow, thank you," stammered Jane, surprised by such a lavish gift. "So, what makes you interested in this role?" Jane asked.



"I want Sums CPAs on my resume. Daddy says I need a job and to stop relying on his money, so here I am!" Amelia stated with an enthusiasm that felt forced.

"You seem to be doing pretty well for yourself to me, Amelia" replied Jane, noting Amelia's designer handbag and dress.

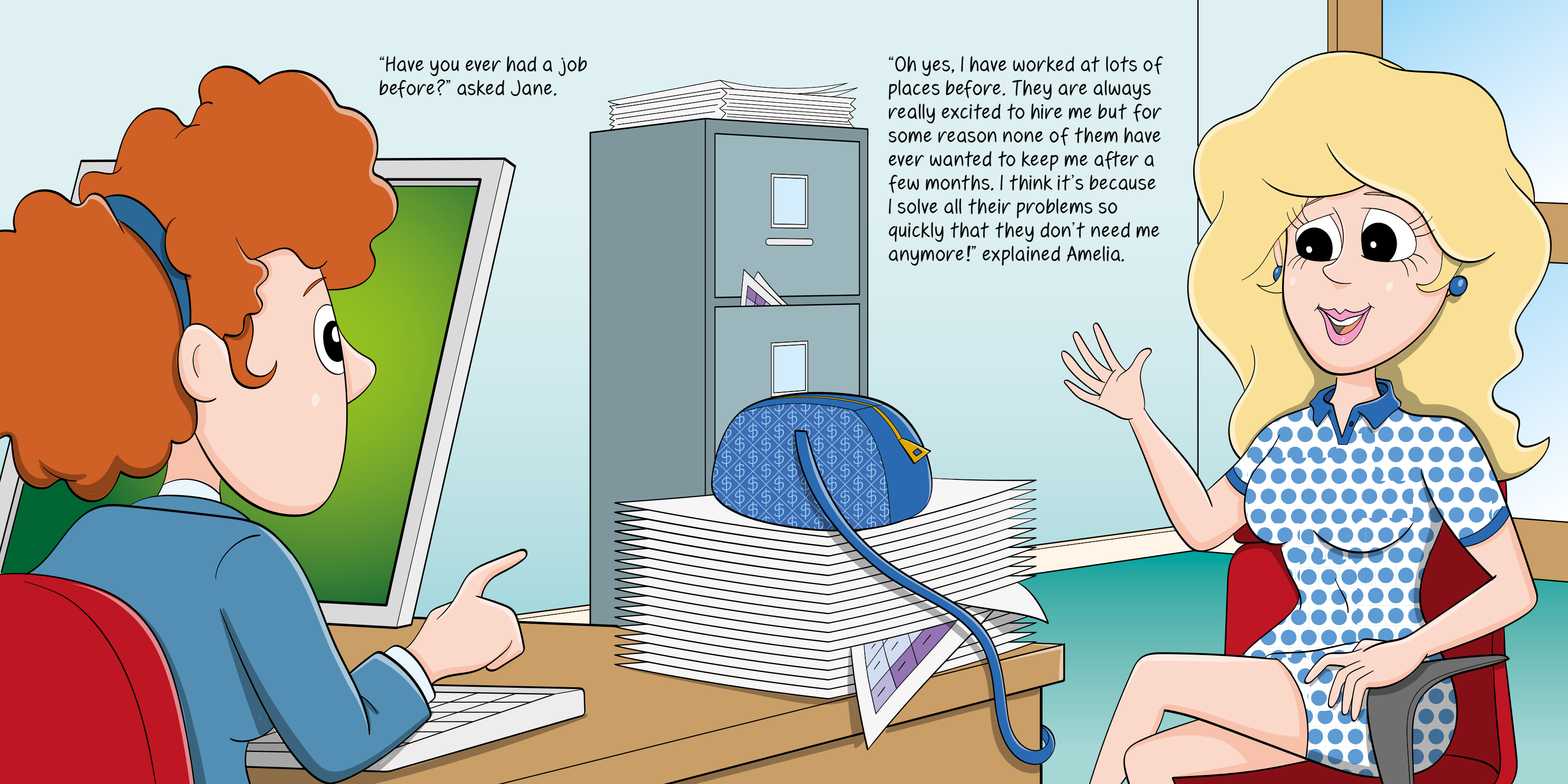




"I got my annual allowance from
Daddy earlier this month,"
blushed Amelia. "But I've already
spent most of it. I will be asking
him for more soon."

"Have you ever had a job before?" asked Jane.

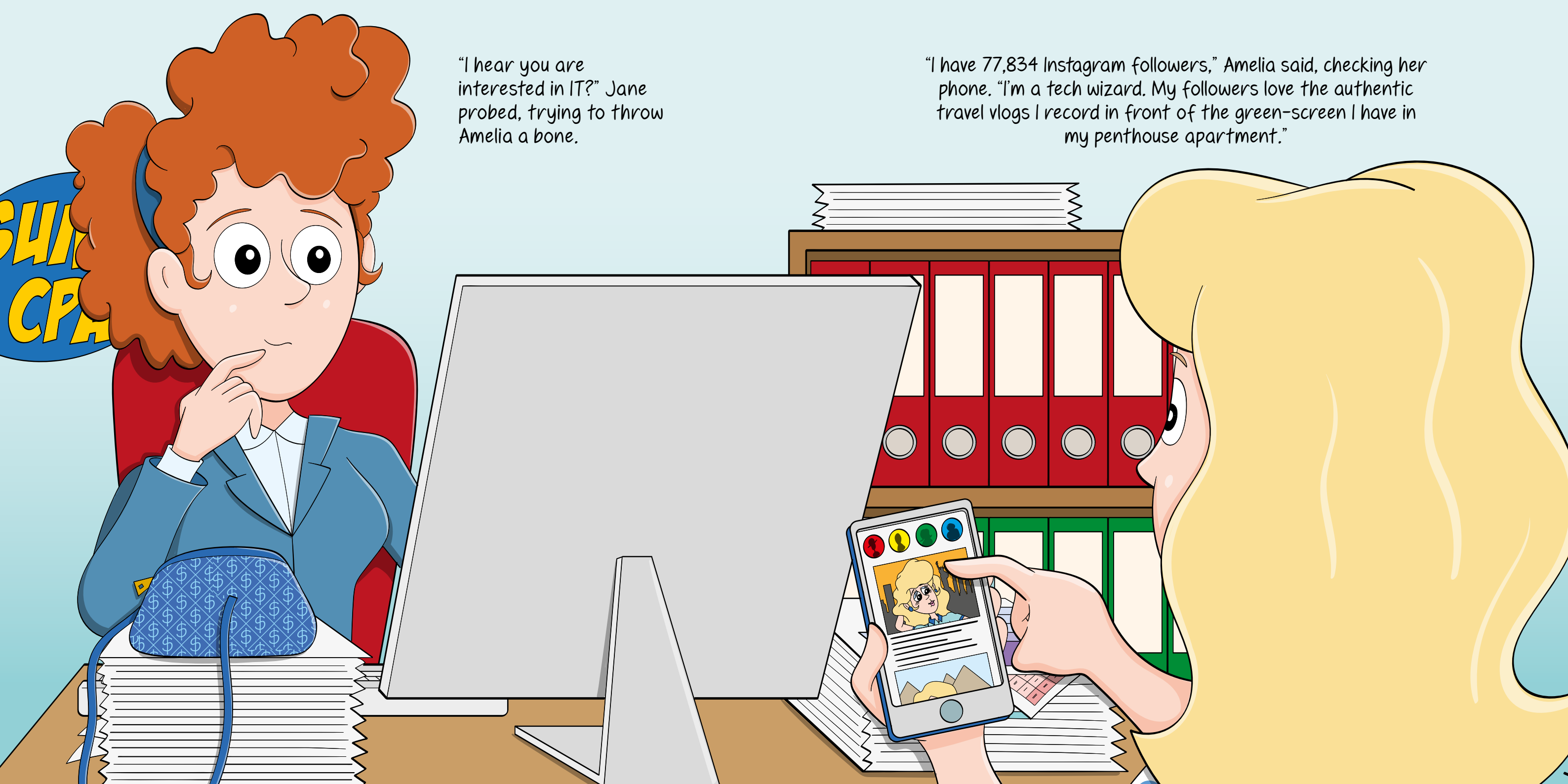
"Oh yes, I have worked at lots of places before. They are always really excited to hire me but for some reason none of them have ever wanted to keep me after a few months. I think it's because I solve all their problems so quickly that they don't need me anymore!" explained Amelia.

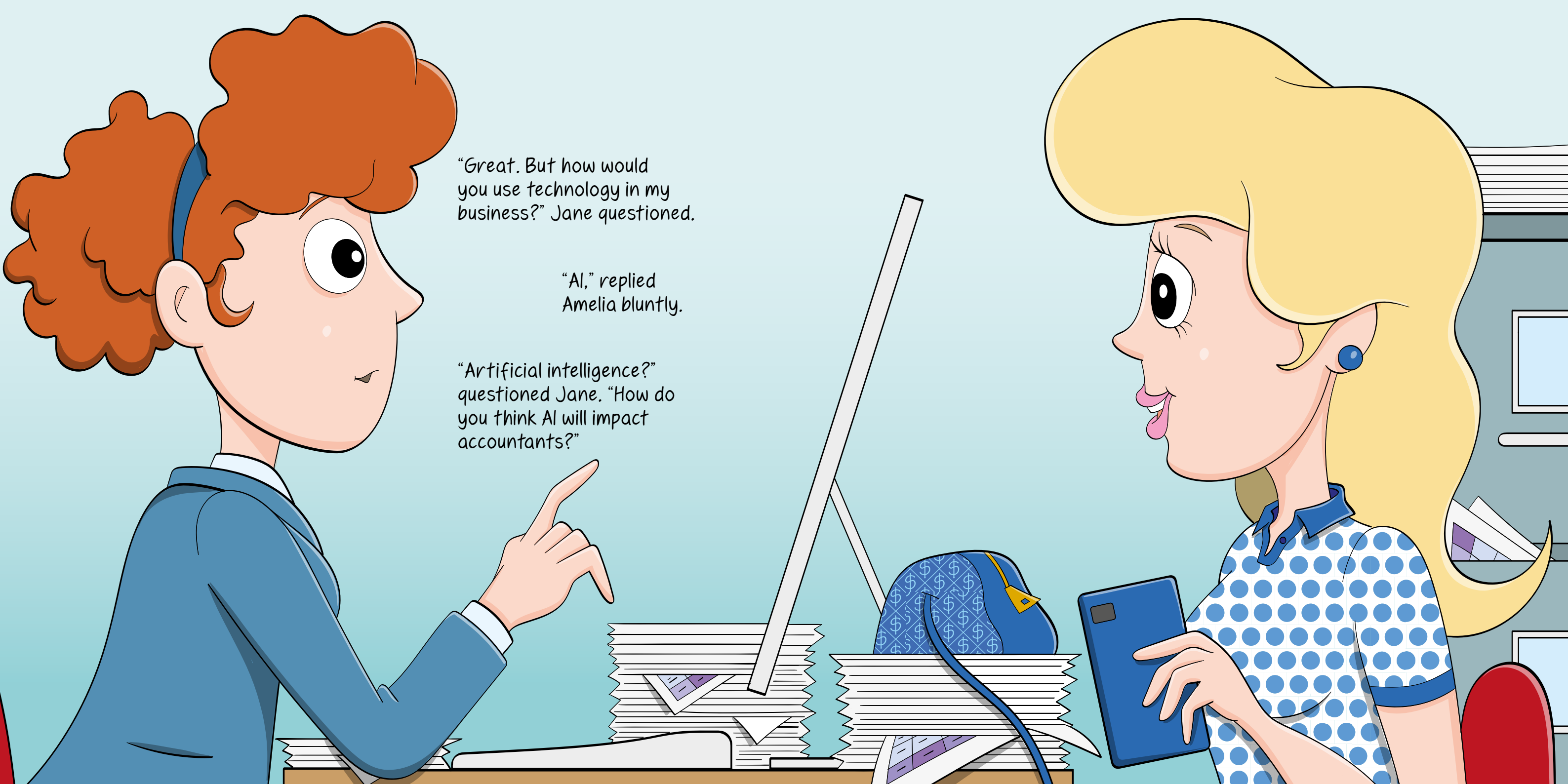


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"I hear you are interested in IT?" Jane probed, trying to throw Amelia a bone.

"I have 77,834 Instagram followers," Amelia said, checking her phone. "I'm a tech wizard. My followers love the authentic travel vlogs I record in front of the green-screen I have in my penthouse apartment."

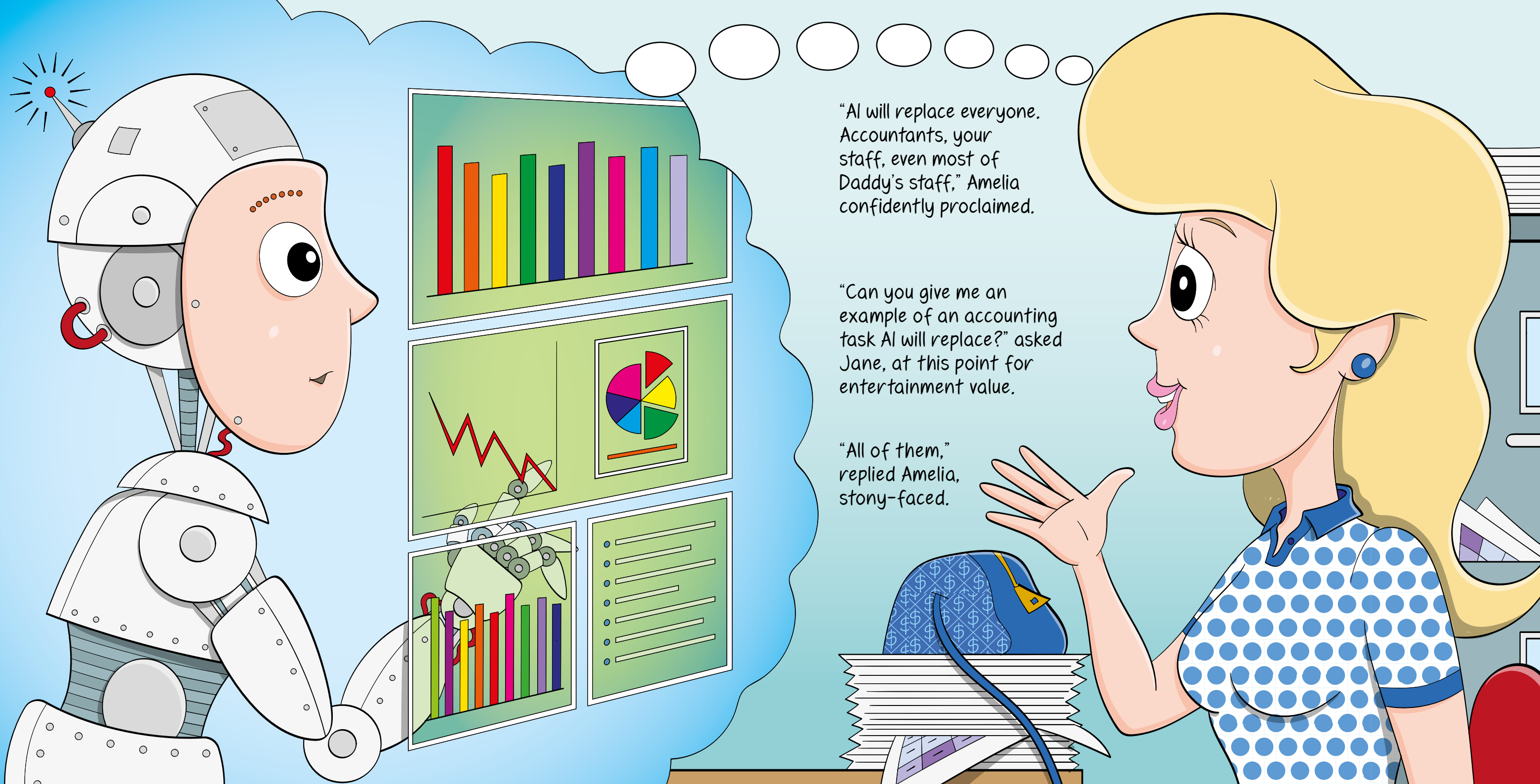




"Great. But how would you use technology in my business?" Jane questioned.

"AI," replied Amelia bluntly.

"Artificial intelligence?" questioned Jane. "How do you think AI will impact accountants?"



"AI will replace everyone. Accountants, your staff, even most of Daddy's staff," Amelia confidently proclaimed.

"Can you give me an example of an accounting task AI will replace?" asked Jane, at this point for entertainment value.

"All of them," replied Amelia, stony-faced.

"Okay then," Jane replied, now unsure if she was interviewing for a partner or a sci-fi villain.



"I have some questions," added Amelia, feeling the interview was going well. "I have a list of countries I want to see. I'm assuming you fly business class when you are travelling to clients overseas?"



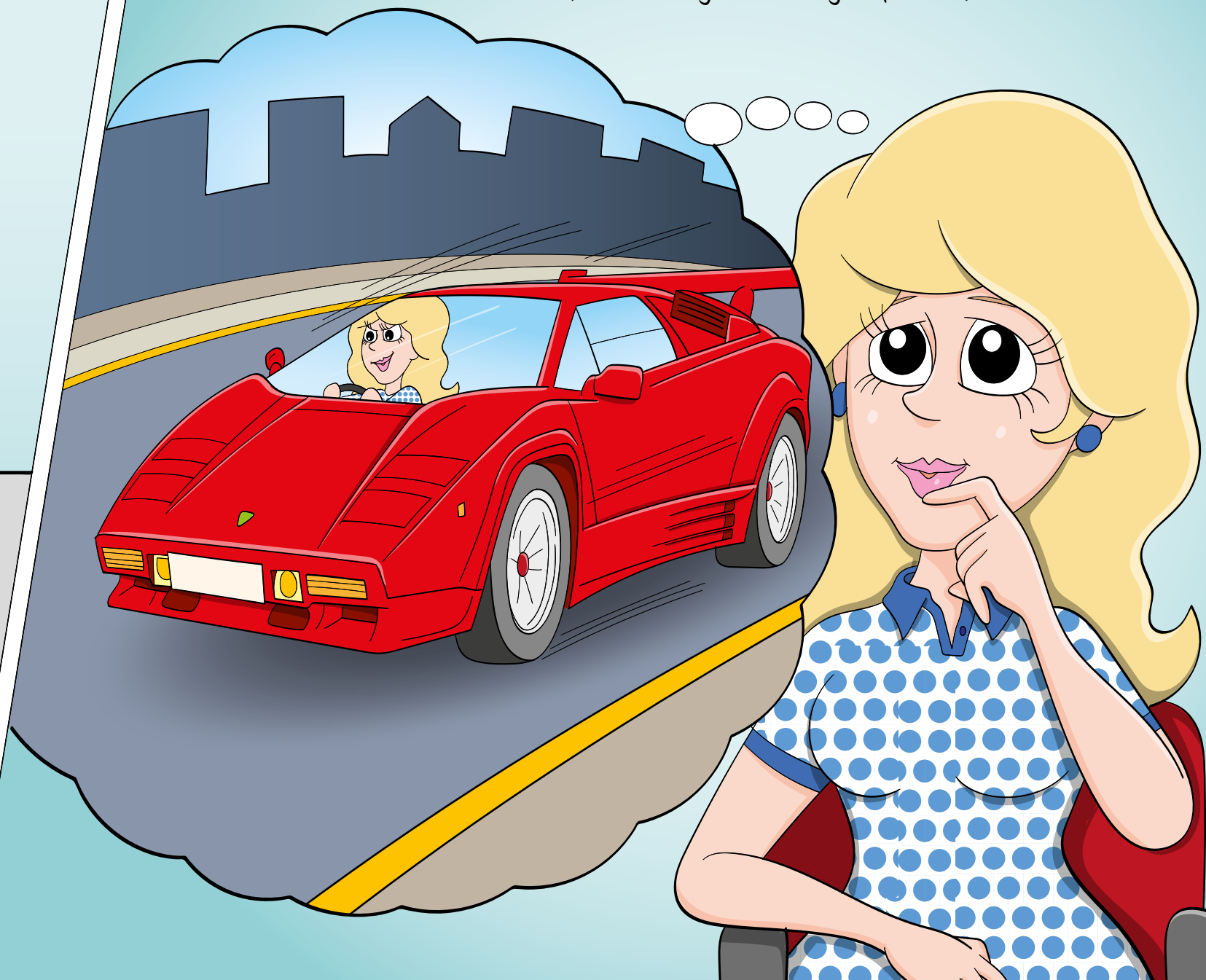
- South of France
- Yachting, Saint-Tropez
- New York - Fashion week
- Paris - Eiffel Tower
- London - Wimbledon
- Monaco - Grand Prix
- USA - Burning Man
- America - Vidcon
- Singapore - Haji Lane
- Australia - Bondi Beach
- Venice - Orient Express
- Egypt - Valley of the Kings
- Bora Bora, French Polynesia, the overwater bungalows
- Millan - La Scala
- Iceland - Blue Lagoon
- Bali, Indonesia

"We don't travel overseas," said Jane, a little confused.
"All our clients are local, within driving distance."

Jane subtly checked her
watch by pretending to
stretch her arm. Her
heart sank. Five minutes
with Amelia felt like
forty-five.



"Ah, OK. A car allowance is fine, I guess. I have been
wanting to get this cute little Lambo for a while
now, but Daddy won't buy it for me," said Amelia.



“And it would be better for me if the salary was \$250,000.” added Amelia.
“That’s what Tanya Taylor claims she is earning from her Insta ads, and I wouldn’t want a job that pays less than that.”





"My goodness. I have just realized I have another commitment, Amelia," interrupted Jane, looking at her phone's lock screen intently, as though it contained detailed military instructions. "I'm so sorry but I am going to have to end it there. I'll be in touch"



Jane felt more optimistic as she welcomed Rick, the self-proclaimed savior of accounting, into her office the next day.

"Nice to connect with you, Julie. Can you see my screen? Can you hear me OK?" asked Rick, forgetting this was an in-person meeting, not Zoom. "You need a partner because your accounting firm is creaking," continued Rick.

"And there are no good partners in the market. So, in this short presentation I will explain how hiring Rick Comfort will solve those problems, transform your business, and unlock record-breaking profits."

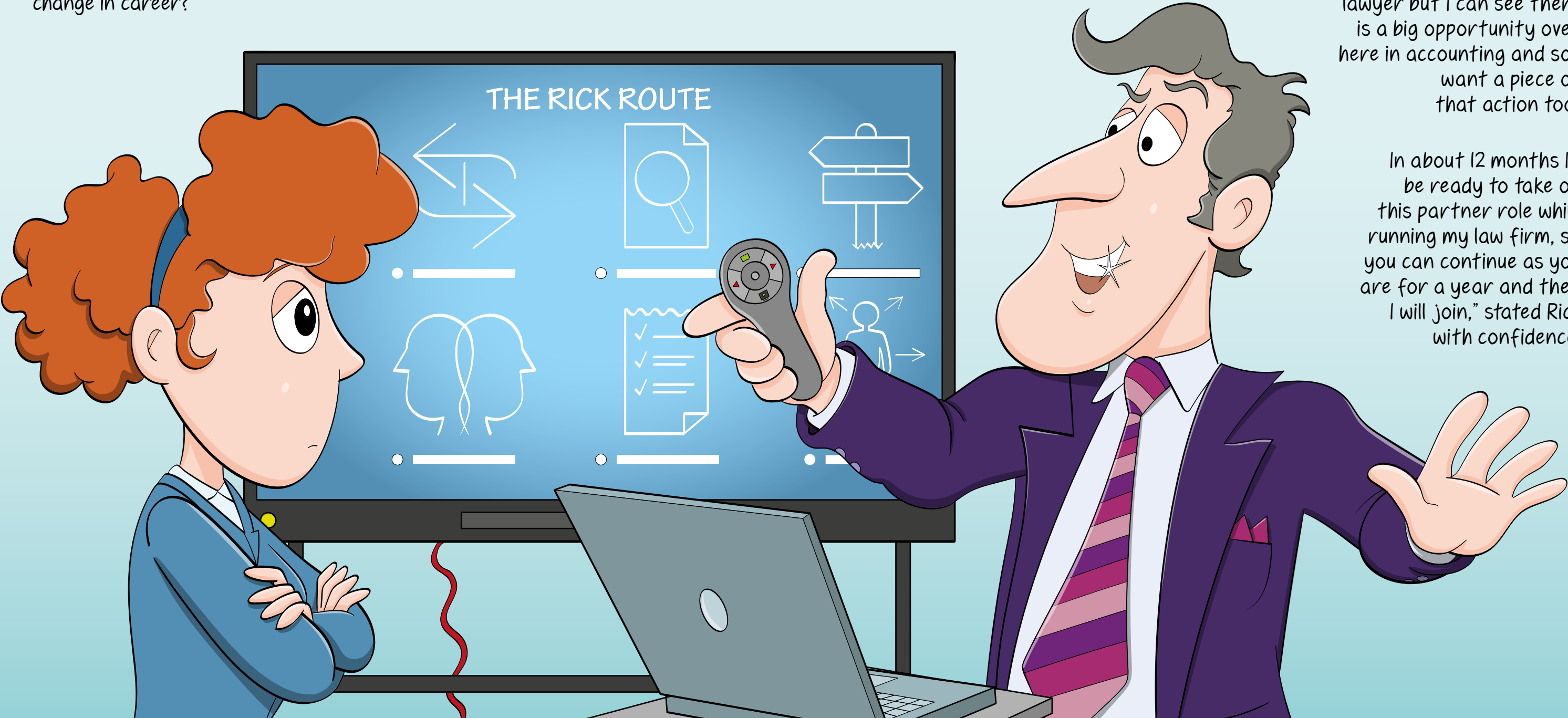




"CPA firms have a common challenge. Time. You charge all your clients by the hour for your work. So, to make you more money, I will get your current team to work more hours and hire more people. Accounting is a simple business really!".

Rick droned on for over 40 minutes, bombarding Jane with statistics, quotes on why accounting is changing, and pretty graphics with little substance. All designed to tell Jane she needed to hire a partner.

Standing up to break the vicious snooze-loop Rick's presentation had put her into, Jane asked "Your resume says you're a lawyer. How will you manage this change in career?"



"I am making a lot of money as a successful lawyer but I can see there is a big opportunity over here in accounting and so I want a piece of that action too!"

In about 12 months I'll be ready to take on this partner role while running my law firm, so you can continue as you are for a year and then I will join," stated Rick with confidence.

"I need a partner now," replied Jane. "Do you appreciate what leading an accounting firm will involve? I'm not sure you should be working for me and keeping your current role."

"The accounting profession needs a disrupter. Rick Comfort is that disruptor. Hiring Rick will put your firm at the drivers wheel in the self driving car of tomorrow".

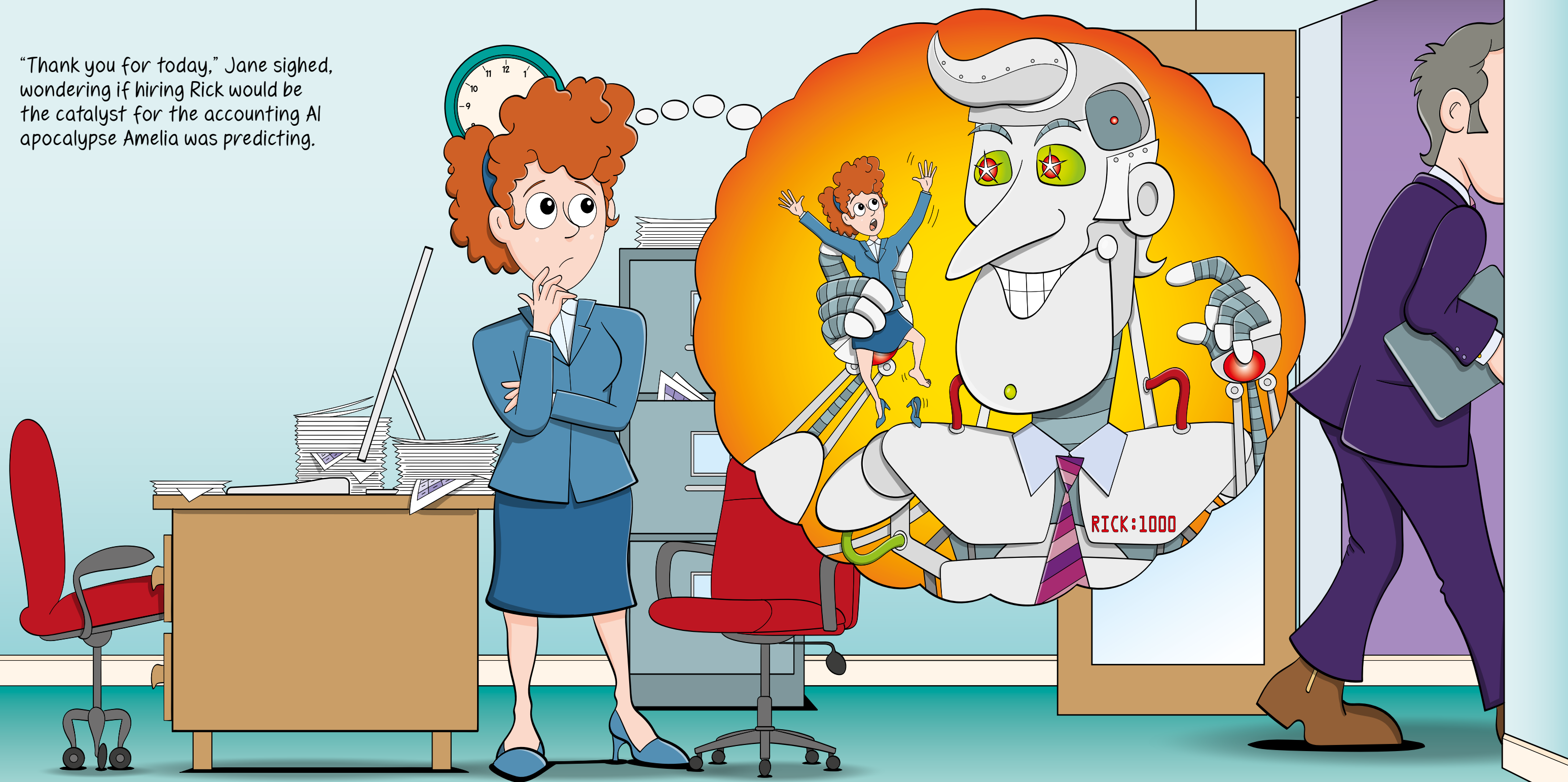
Rick Comfort 2024

"I can be a lawyer and your partner at the same time. Piece of cake," Rick assured, reading Jane's skepticism.

"All my clients have accountants and I have seen what accountants do. It's like Groundhog Day, but with numbers. Passive income month after month, year after year. A great way to put my kids through Harvard and buy another couple of holiday homes!" Rick quipped.



"Thank you for today," Jane sighed, wondering if hiring Rick would be the catalyst for the accounting AI apocalypse Amelia was predicting.



A few days later, Jane found herself in her office's downstairs coffee shop 'Better Latte Than Never', where she bumped into a young man with an affinity for accounting.



"Might you be Jane Sums?"
asked the man.

"Yes, how can I help you?"
Jane replied .

"I'm Flow, Ian Flow. I was just about to deliver my curriculum vitae through your letterbox," Ian shared.

"Your what? Are you a student?" Jane puzzled.

"My application for your partner position. Have I missed the deadline?" Ian inquired.






"No, I am still interviewing" Jane said.

"Oh splendid! My dear mother often tells people I was diligently ticking and bashing in diapers! Recently I was a partner for a firm similar to yours,"

"Ticking and what?" queried Jane. "Actually, never mind that. So, was your previous firm local to here? Have you included references in your application?"

"They were based in Oxford, England. Rupert would be thrilled to provide you with a reference. I partnered with him and transformed the firm during my tenure." replied Ian.





"Have you worked in the US before?" asked Jane, a little disappointed.

"Most of my career to date was in the United Kingdom. But I have been working in the US a lot recently. I spent a lot of time listening to what accounting firms here need and I have started to build up a loyal following. I'm ready to really grow a forward-thinking firm!" shared Ian enthusiastically.

"OK," said Jane. "Things are a little different here to the UK. How well do you think you and I would work together?"

“You already have clients who love your firm. I have the passion and know-how to help you continue to grow. I will bring in new technologies, give your team the skills they need to deliver high-quality work more efficiently, and I’ll make sure they enjoy working for Sums CPAs!”

“Together we’ll provide more valuable services to clients and win many more! We can transform your firm and ensure its attractive for future hires,” said Ian.

“Ok, give me your resume, and I’ll be in touch,” Jane grinned, entertained by Ian’s confidence.



Jane's quest for a partner had been quite a journey, with Chuck's modernization promises, Amelia's AI revolution, Rick's questionable career shift, and Ian's passion for change. Who would she choose to partner with to lead Sums CPAs into the future?

Who would you hire?
Scan the QR code to cast your vote.



THE END



Jane's business is growing, but it's chaotic. She wrestles with an ever-expanding number of clients who want more and more from her. Reluctant to turn down more work, she seeks a partner – someone she can rely on to help grow her business more efficiently. But will she find the right candidate?

Partnering Up is a simple story packed with insights to help leaders better select strategic partners to help drive change. As many businesses reevaluate the technology they use to deliver their products and services, it is not just product functionality, but also the company behind the product which leaders must appraise.

Each candidate represents the typical vendors you may find offering technology solutions. This book shows you how to:

- Define what innovation support you want.
- Evaluate tech companies offering products.
- Think more strategically about change.
- Find the right tech partner for your business.

Learn how to find an innovation partner, not just a technology product, to secure a longer-term solution for your business.

